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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 002975

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SUBJECT: DUMP CHEN MOVEMENT BOGGING DOWN AS PRESIDENT'S
SUPPORTERS RALLY

Classified By: AIT Director Stephen M. Young, Reason 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary: Supporters of President Chen sponsored a rally in Taipei's 228 Peace Memorial Park on August 26 to shore up support for the beleaguered president, lashing out at organizers of an anti-Chen movement who are planning to start their rallies later this week. While attending the inauguration of an independent media watchdog the same day, President Chen portrayed himself as "victim" of a media controlled by opposition pan-Blue interests. The "Depose Chen" movement, on the other hand, has gotten bogged down recently, announcing its sit-down protest would begin only on September 9. This has prompted the other anti-Chen organization, the Democratic Action Alliance, to announce its own demonstration Friday evening, September 1, calling for Chen to resign. Both ruling and opposition parties have been cautioning participants against letting peaceful demonstrations turn into violent confrontations. End Summary.

President Chen Supporters Steal the March

12. (SBU) Pro-Green political commentators and a few ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislators jointly sponsored a rally in Taipei's 228 Peace Memorial Park on Saturday, August 26, to voice their support for a beleaguered President Chen. Chen's staunch supporters lashed out at former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-te for organizing the "Million Person Depose Chen" movement, calling on Shih to end his activities and criticizing other former supporters of the ruling pan-Green camp for endorsing the anti-Chen movement. Between 5,000 to 10,000 people, many said to have been bused in from southern Taiwan, reportedly participated in the rally in support of Chen. Despite some minor confrontations between pro-Chen supporters and anti-Chen onlookers, the demonstration concluded peacefully.

13. (SBU) During the inauguration of a new independent media watchdog society over the weekend, President Chen portrayed himself as a "victim" of erroneous media reports and called on media outlets to exert greater "self-discipline." Chen further cautioned that using extra-legal means to force a duly elected president to resign could lead to violence, a veiled reference to a fisticuffs started by a "Depose Chen"

supporter on a TV talk show last Thursday and an appeal for all sides to reduce tensions. In a direct counter to Shih's call for a "revolution," Chen added that preaching revolution in a democracy was a "complete negation" of the democratic system and a fundamental challenge to human rights and the power entrusted to the government.

Upcoming Anti-Chen Activities

14. (C) Shih Ming-te announced at an outdoor press conference August 28 that his sit-in will begin on September 9 and continue until President Chen steps down. Having reached its goal of signing up one million people and collecting NT\$100 million last week, however, the campaign led by Shih has been seen by many to be moving too slowly. Responding to media inquiries, Shih explained that they need more time to prepare logistics for the sit-in. Some have speculated that Shih has used President Chen's September 3-6 travel to the South Pacific as an excuse for delaying until the President is back to face his critics. In the face of pro-Chen activities this weekend, the lack of action from Shih's headquarters to date has prompted some observers to question Shih's organizational skills and to suspect that Shih is losing momentum. DPP legislator Eugene Chao told AIT on August 25 that by the time Shih starts his movement enthusiasm will probably have waned significantly as mainstream voters are increasingly turned off by the incessant political showmanship. Chao predicted that Shih will be lucky to have a turn-out of a few thousand.

15. (C) The Democratic Action Alliance (DAA), another organization that has come out against Chen, announced on August 27 that it would launch its own series of activities ahead of Shih's "Depose Chen" sit-in. DAA convener Huang

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Kwang-kuo said his organization will hold a "Democratic Night Market" on Friday, September 1, that would last through the weekend. The DAA has said it will work closely with Shih's headquarters to coordinate activities. KMT legislator Joanna Lei told AIT on August 25 that she and others from the KMT have been working closely with representatives from both movements to develop crowd-control and anti-violence measures for the upcoming protests.

DPP, KMT Call for Restraint

16. (SBU) Over the past weekend DPP and KMT leaders urged participants of both pro- and anti-Chen activities to remain calm and avoid confrontation. The DPP announced last week a policy of "no mobilization, no confrontation" toward the anti-Chen movement. Moderate DPP legislators have been calling for supporters and detractors to remain rational, exercise self-restraint, and avoid personal attacks for the sake of social harmony and national well-being. KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, who as Taipei mayor is responsible for maintaining law and order, urged all participants to remain calm while taking part in the rallies, and he announced a "zero tolerance" of violence policy. Speculation continues in the press as to whether Ma himself will participate in Shih's movement, to which he earlier donated NT\$100 as a "private" citizen.

Comment

17. (C) Despite the ongoing verbal exchanges between critics and defenders of President Chen, it appears that calmer heads may be prevailing in Taipei. The statements by both DPP and KMT leaders, while in part aimed at disavowing themselves of any blame if things turn violent, appear to be efforts to inject some self-restraint and rationality back into what has become a frenzied political atmosphere over the past two weeks.

